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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE ROLLING THUNDER PROGRAM

(The case in which the Rolling Thunder program that existed before 31 March is resumed, but assuming that North Vietnam attempts to infiltrate and support one, two, three, or four combat divisions into South Vietnam.) (No. 11)

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
3 July 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Possible Alternatives
to the Rolling Thunder Program

(The case in which the Rolling Thunder program that existed before 31 March is resumed, but assuming that North Vietnam attempts to infiltrate and support one, two, three, or four more combat divisions into South Vietnam.) (No. 11)

Summary

The deployment of an additional four divisions from North to South Vietnam would not place a major burden on the Vietnamese logistical system. The increase in the requirement for supplies from North Vietnam would be an estimated 30 tons a day. If the four divisions were deployed in areas where other sources could be tapped for food supplies, the added logistics requirements to be provided by North Vietnam could be as little as 7 tons a day.

The logistics requirement resulting from the new deployments would not place a major strain on the Vietnamese logistical system, although the movement would be more complicated and costly. The movement of 30 tons a day would be only slightly more than 10 percent of the estimated average daily levels of traffic moved to the Laotian Panhandle during the first three months of 1968. This high level of resupply through North Vietnam and Laos has not been seriously impeded by bombing in the past,

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SECRET

25X1

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including the concentrated level of attack since 31 March. The continued expansion and improvement of the transport nets in North Vietnam and Laos will provide the Communists with an even further cushion against the effects of an attack.

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Logistical Requirements

Logistical requirements from out-of-country sources for the Communist forces in South Vietnam have never been large. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces currently in South Vietnam require about 300 tons of logistical support daily, of which only about 90 tons -- 30 percent -- must come from external sources.

Augmenting the enemy forces in South Vietnam by an additional four divisions would increase total enemy logistical requirements by about 60 tons a day, 30 tons of which would have to come from external sources as shown in the table.

Estimated Daily Logistical Requirements
for Viet Cong and North Vietnamese
Regular and Administrative Support Troops
in South Vietnam

Class of Supply	Short Tons per Day			
	Current Requirements		Increment of Four Additional Divisions	
	Total	External	Total	External
I (food)	236.0	60.0	46.6	23.8
II and IV (clothing and equipment)	39.3	11.8	8.2	2.7
III (POL)	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.	Negl.
V (Ammunition)	21.6	20.6	4.6	4.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>296.9</i>	<i>92.4</i>	<i>59.4</i>	<i>30.6</i>

This estimate assumes that the four divisions would (1) be deployed in the I Corps area, (2) be able to obtain only one-half of their food requirements in-country and rely on North Vietnam for the remainder, and (3) engage in a high rate of combat -- one day out of fifteen. If the forces were deployed to the II Corps area, one-half of the food requirements would probably still have to come from external sources, but they could be supplied with most of these requirements from Cambodia rather than North Vietnam. If the forces were deployed in the III or IV Corps area, their external requirement could

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be much less. In some areas, their food requirement could be satisfied completely from in-country sources. Under these circumstances the supplies to be provided by North Vietnam would be limited. They would include small amounts of clothing, weapons, and ammunition totaling only about 7 tons a day.

Route Capacities

Transport capacities in Laos and North Vietnam are already in excess of the traffic flow required to sustain an augmented Communist force in South Vietnam.* Routes constructed during the past year and construction currently under way will provide the Communists with even more capacity to move supplies by truck into Laos, and from Laos into at least four major areas of South Vietnam located between the Khe Sanh area and the tri-border area. When a third major access road into Laos is completed later this year, the throughput truck capacity from North Vietnam via Laos into South Vietnam will be about 1,000 tons a day during the dry season and 200 tons a day in the rainy season. The only restricting sector in this pipeline will be Route 92/96 in the southern part of the Panhandle, which limits the movement to the tri-border area to about 200 tons a day in the dry season and 50 tons a day during the wet season.

Air Attacks

Air attacks over Laos and North Vietnam have increased the cost and complicated the movement of supplies; however, even with increased intensity, they are not likely to reduce the flow below that needed to maintain an augmented enemy force in South Vietnam. A record volume of traffic -- 240 tons per day -- moved into the Laotian Panhandle during the first quarter of 1968 in the face of heavy air attacks. Even if the unusually high reported loss rate of trucks and supplies in the first quarter of this year is accurate and is sustained, losses could be made good by imports from the USSR, China, and Eastern Europe. Transport routes have considerable

* For a discussion of various aspects of interdicting the flow of supplies, see Questions 7, 8, and 10.

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excess capacity, and, even with increased bomb damage, the rudimentary transport system is easily repaired and the network could support increased traffic flows. Furthermore, the present repair force could be augmented by additional local labor



25X1

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